

28 July 2017

H.E. Nguyen Thi Kim Tien

Chair, APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy
Minister of Health
Viet Nam

Dear Minister Nguyen Thi Kim Tien:

The healthcare challenges facing the APEC region threaten the quality of life and economic development. ABAC strongly supports APEC's focus on a healthy workforce as being a critical requirement for inclusive growth and for this year's theme of "Creating New Dynamism, Fostering a Shared Future." We welcome your leadership in hosting the 7th High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy which provides a unique opportunity for dialogue with healthcare stakeholders seeking innovative health solutions and outcomes that provide shared benefits.

ABAC is encouraged by the progress in the implementation of the APEC Healthy Asia-Pacific Roadmap. We urge Health Ministers to engage with the private sector to achieve the Roadmap's goals of strengthening health systems, and improving the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases.

We welcome the contribution of the APEC Life Sciences Innovation Forum (LSIF) and the Health Working Group (HWG) to the High-Level Meeting. Their respective and shared work programs are unique globally as they address issues that affect the quality of services delivered and the challenges faced increasingly by populations in our region. These range from the safety of the region's blood supply, addressing antimicrobial resistance, including tuberculosis, aging populations, and areas where there are inordinately high incidences of disease in APEC economies such as cervical cancer, diabetes and associated morbidities, renal failure, mental health, and other forms of chronic disease.

At the same time, as health systems are dealing with these challenges, ABAC is working with the HWG and the LSIF to address the fiscal and economic impacts of ill-health, as called for by APEC Finance Ministers and APEC Leaders.

APEC and ABAC studies conducted in 2014 and 2015 showed significant predicted GDP losses (of up to 8.5 percent) through 2030 in APEC economies due to ill-health and early retirement due to disability. In 2015, APEC Leaders acknowledged the linkage between good health and fiscal stability.

ABAC was very encouraged that the APEC Finance Ministers' Meeting (FMM) in October 2016 included a discussion with the LSIF and the HWG on the productivity gains from investing in health and viewing health as an asset class with measurable returns on public and private investment. ABAC, the LSIF and the HWG have long called for cross-sectoral policy coordination between health, finance and economic ministers to achieve the common goal of proactive investment in healthy workforces by improving the use of government financing and expenditure tools that can lead to more efficient financing of and access to healthcare.

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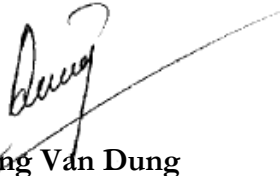
As a follow up to the 2016 FMM discussion, at the 18 May 2017 APEC Senior Finance Officials' Meeting (SFOM), experts from the LSIF and the HWG discussed the creation of a virtual task force that would identify and look at ways of addressing the fiscal and economic impacts of ill-health in accordance with the implementation of the Cebu Action Plan. The objective is to identify alternative financing mechanisms and their enablers that would bring efficiencies into the system while increasing access to healthcare so the challenges outlined above can be addressed effectively. The task force will also assess the feasibility of developing a checklist or toolkit outlining the metrics for measuring the return on investment in health for consideration by FMM in October 2017. ABAC encourages interested Senior Health and SFOM members to join in the task force with the HWG and the LSIF. We also encourage APEC to consider ways in which the burden of ill-health falls disproportionately on small businesses and women, and what measures can be taken to remedy this.

ABAC supports the continued development and utilization of the Healthy Women, Healthy Economies (HWHE) toolkit which showcases government policies and business practices that address health-related barriers to women's effective participation in the workforce.

Despite forecasts for improved economic growth in the region this year, growing healthcare challenges and burgeoning healthcare costs threaten that growth. Now more than ever, high-impact investments by governments and businesses in robust healthcare systems, supported by good economic policies and efficient regulatory systems, are required to ensure that this fragile momentum is not lost.

We encourage Health Ministers to continue to forge dialogues and exchanges with the private sector that provide information about critical health issues, helping finance, commerce, and trade ministries understand the direct and substantial impact health has on every economy's bottom line in human and economic terms.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hoang Van Dung', is written over a thin, light-colored diagonal line that extends from the bottom left towards the top right.

Hoang Van Dung
ABAC Chair 2017